

For our next topic to hold hearings, we received a number of suggestions. Our mandate is to look at issues having a disparate impact on people based on a federally protected class such as race, religion, sex, disability, national origin, etc. Two topics that have been presented for consideration conforming to our mandate have particular resonance in Ohio involving bail reform and equal access to education. Other topics listed may need to be further refined to show a connection to disparate impact on a protected class.

1. **Race and bail reform: Ohio.** The U.S. Supreme Court has confirmed that the pretrial detention period is perhaps the “most critical period” in the criminal justice process yet disparities based on race and national origin at this crucial time have not been fully studied. Race and bond amounts appear to be correlated. Defendants who have been denied bail are many times more likely to face jail or prison time. Our study of the numerous bail reform efforts occurring in Ohio would dovetail with the next topic of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission which will be examining the disparate impact of municipal court fines and fees on minority groups.
2. **Barriers to equal access to education in Ohio.** This topic would look at barriers faced by children with disabilities; racial and religious barriers; and gender issues blocking equal access to education.
3. Do University Campus PC Codes harm the civil right of free speech or permissibly enhance learning? Various aspects of University PC codes have been in the news. The Universities seem to like PC Codes, Trigger warnings and Safe Spaces. But many people have ridiculed them and asserted that they chill and undermine free speech. Perhaps it is time to look at this from the context of the civil right of “student free speech.”
4. Should parental choice in education be expanded to help children escape from poverty and deficient traditional public education or should educational alternatives be restricted more than they currently are? There has been a lot of experimentation in Ohio with alternate educational choice and this could be an interesting area of study and could be helpful in formulating public policy, especially in light of the new Secretary of Education’s likely focus on this issue.
5. Should the federal government be promoting the civil right of the individual right to keep and bear arms to allow those in high crime areas better access to self-protection or will increased access to firearms by law-abiding citizens unreasonably undermine public safety? There has long been a debate about the wisdom of gun control and the private possession of firearms. The entire country has been a laboratory on concealed carry laws and other gun control. This is a topic that engenders passions on both sides of the issue. It might be worthwhile to look at it from a civil rights perspective.

I look forward to selecting one of these topics for our next inquiry during our call on **Tuesday, Dec. 20 at 10:30 EST.**

Diane Citrino, Chair